

DSHS/DVR 2016 – 2020 State Plan

Evaluation & Reports of Progress

Draft Federal Guidance

Describe:

1. An evaluation of the extent to which the VR program goals described in the approved VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan for the most recently completed program year were achieved. The evaluation must:
 - a. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
 - b. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.
2. An evaluation of the extent to which the Supported Employment program goals described in the Supported Employment Supplement for the most recent program year were achieved. The evaluation must:
 - a. Identify the strategies that contributed to the achievement of the goals.
 - b. Describe the factors that impeded the achievement of the goals and priorities.
3. The VR program's performance on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA.
4. How the funds reserved for innovation and expansion (I&E) activities were utilized.

Introduction

This section provides an evaluation of DSHS/DVR's implementation of the goals and priorities established in the previous state plan, the FFY 2015 DSHS/DVR State Plan. This evaluation includes data analysis, performance and activity summaries, and descriptions of performance challenges and their effects on DSHS/DVR progress. Special consideration is given to the Supported Employment Program. Lastly, a description of funded innovation and expansion activities is included.

FFY 2015 Evaluation: Goals, Strategies, & Barriers

DSHS/DVR rehabilitated 3,191 customers in FFY 2015, supporting these individuals with disabilities in achieving gainful employment. This was an increase in closed-rehabilitated outcomes of 386 (12.0%) from the previous year.

In FFY 2015, DSHS/DVR accepted 9,450 applications, a decrease of 284 (3.0%) from applications accepted during FFY 2014; 8,616 individuals were determined eligible for services, a decrease of 51 (1.0%); and 4,947 new Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) were developed, a decrease of 432 (9.0%) from this prior year.

The continued reduction in applications and eligible individuals during FFY 2015 occurred at a slower pace than in FFY 2014 due to increased outreach in select locales. DSHS/DVR's concern regarding reduced applications prompted statewide outreach initiatives. Preliminary analysis indicates these outreach activities have been moderately successful.

While overall vocational rehabilitation (VR) service volumes decreased, service costs increased. The average cost of a rehabilitation closure increased from FFY 2014 to FFY 2015, the fourth such increase in the last five years. The steady increase in average rehabilitation costs over the last five years is significant, a \$ 1,183 increase from FFY 2011 to FFY 2015. Said differently, the average FFY 2015 rehabilitation costs DSHS/DVR 120.65% of FFY 2011 costs.

DSHS/DVR continues to closely monitor its fiscal resources to assure maximum case service capacity is maintained.

DSHS/DVR Average Closed-Rehabilitated Case Costs: FFY 2011 – FFY 2015

FFY	Average Closed-Rehabilitated Case Costs	Percent Change from Prior Year
2011	\$5,727	6.1%
2012	\$6,101	6.5%
2013	\$6,775	11.1%
2014	\$6,698	-1.1%
2015	\$6,910	3.2%

FFY 2015 Goal One: Provide Timely, Individualized Services to DSHS/DVR Customers that Result in Employment Outcomes that Meet the Customer's Needs.

Priorities & Evaluation

2015 Priority

Outreach, education, and marketing efforts will be targeted to individuals with disabilities who are: already working to retain or progress in employment, previous DSHS/DVR customers who may have lost employment and want to become reemployed, college students nearing completion of their academic programs, individuals who have exhausted their Unemployment Insurance benefits, and other groups who are identified as underserved.

Evaluation Outreach plans were developed and implemented by local DSHS/DVR offices to reach these targeted populations. Overall, the success of these plans was mixed and continued emphasis is being placed on reaching these underserved populations. Efforts to coordinate outreach with the Employment Security Department (ESD) and local Workforce Development Councils (WDCs) proved to be more challenging than anticipated and will be a focus of improvement throughout development and implementation of this Combined State Plan.

2015 Priority

Strengthen efforts to assist customers in learning lifelong job seeking skills so they know how to get and keep jobs when DSHS/DVR is no longer in their lives, including how to be an effective self-advocate to obtain needed reasonable accommodations on the job.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR hired and deployed 18 Business Specialists across the state to assist customers in successfully conducting a self-directed job search. These specialists assist customers in learning lifelong job seeking skills (e.g. how to find job openings and submit successful applications, resume development, how to prepare for and effectively respond to interview questions, and how to request a reasonable accommodation).

2015 Priority

Improve communication and the continuity of communication with customers while they are developing and implementing IPEs, so that individuals better understand what services are available, where they are in the process, and whether they are making progress towards their employment goal.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR published a Customer Handbook that contains extensive information designed to inform and guide individuals through each step of the VR process. The handbook is given to every customer and reviewed periodically during counseling and guidance sessions so the individual understands where they are in the VR process and whether they are making progress towards their employment goal.

2015 Priority

Place greater emphasis and reinforce the customer's active role in the VR process, including better assistance to customers who require job search and placement services, especially those who conduct a self-directed job search.

Evaluation Use of the Customer Handbook as a counseling and guidance tool reinforces

the customer's involvement throughout the VR process. In addition, the Business Specialists that have been hired are specifically providing intensified support for customers who require assistance with job search and placement.

2015 Priority

Increase DSHS/DVR's ability to assist customers to achieve higher wage jobs with health benefits.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR conducted Lean A3 events to identify ways to encourage more customers to pursue higher wage jobs with benefits. This produced specific recommendations that have been incorporated in to DSHS/DVR Counselor practices (e.g. assisting customers to conduct more substantive labor market research before choosing an employment goal, encouraging customers to consider employment goals beyond the entry-level, and providing customers with better information about training opportunities that lead to higher wage jobs).

2015 Priority

Improve the statewide consistency of timely, individualized services to customers who have a broad range of needs and capabilities.

Evaluation Use of the new Customer Handbook is designed to improve the statewide consistency of services by assuring that customers fully understand the VR process and scope of services that are available to them. Closer monitoring of case movement and various management reports has improved the timeliness of service delivery.

2015 Priority

Improve the organizational culture to focus even more on customer service, cultural sensitivity, and addressing each individual's barriers to employment throughout the VR process.

Evaluation Use of the new Customer Handbook as counseling and guidance tool is designed to foster more emphasis on customer service. In addition, DSHS/DVR has operationalized expanded and improved elements of a comprehensive vocational assessment that include cultural elements and more complete identification of an individual's barriers to employment throughout the VR process.

2015 Priority

Use the Lean process to identify ways that DSHS/DVR counselors can provide more counseling and guidance to customers.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR did not conduct a Lean process to identify ways that DSHS/DVR counselors can provide more counseling and guidance to customers.

2015 Priority

Continue serving a racially and ethnically diverse customer population that reflects the demographics of the state.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR continued to serve a mix of customers that fully reflects the diversity of the state. Identified gaps in key demographic populations were addressed through targeted outreach.

2015 Priority

More fully utilize Independent Living (IL) and Assistive Technology (AT) services to assist customers in reducing or eliminating their disability barriers to employment. Assure that DSHS/DVR effectively utilizes AT within its offices to accommodate individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

Evaluation	DSHS/DVR revised and strengthened procedures to assure that IL and AT services are fully utilized to assist customers in reducing or eliminating their disability barriers to employment. In addition, DSHS/DVR as installed AT devices in all of its offices to accommodate individuals who are Deaf or hard of hearing, and provided training to staff on use of these devices.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Keep customers better informed of where they are in the VR process as they progress towards their employment goal.
Evaluation	Use of the new Customer handbook as a counseling and guidance tool assures that customers are kept informed of where they are in the VR process as they progress towards their employment goal.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Provide more timely and thorough Benefits Planning to customers who receive Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) so they can make better informed choices about the types of jobs they seek and amount of hours they will work.
Evaluation	All DSHS/DVR counselors have been trained to provide Benefits Planning to their customers who receive SSI. In addition, four DSHS/DVR Benefits Specialists provide Benefits Planning to customers who receive SSDI or both SSDI/SSI. Plans are underway to hire 12 Benefits Technicians who will provide additional Benefits Planning capacity statewide.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Improve and expand services to enhance earnings, employee benefits and career advancement for customers, including individuals served through supported employment.
Evaluation	DSHS/DVR conducted Lean A3 events to identify ways to encourage more customers to pursue higher wage jobs with benefits. This produced specific recommendations that have been incorporated in to DSHS/DVR counselor practices (e.g. assisting customers to conduct more substantive labor market research before choosing an employment goal, encouraging customers to consider employment goals beyond the entry-level, and providing customers with better information about training opportunities that lead to higher wage jobs).
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Conduct annual statewide case record reviews of case service practices to determine consistency and adherence with Federal/state requirements.
Evaluation	FFY 2014 Statewide Case Review findings (conducted in FFY 2015 using FFY 2014 closures) were compiled in an extensive report and distributed to staff statewide. These findings have influenced WIOA implementation, case management software upgrades, and new staff trainings.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Use case review results to identify and implement improvements in quality and consistency of services.
Evaluation	FFY 2014 Statewide Case Review findings (conducted in FFY 2015 using FFY 2014 closures) were compiled in an extensive report and distributed to staff statewide. These findings have influenced WIOA implementation, case management software upgrades, and new staff trainings.

2015 Priority

In light of the limited and highly competitive job market, make more use of available labor market and post-secondary training information to improve vocational assessments and assist customers in better selecting employment goals that match the availability of real jobs.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR conducted Lean A3 events to identify ways to encourage more customers to pursue higher wage jobs with benefits. This produced specific recommendations that have been incorporated in to DSHS/DVR counselor practices (e.g. assisting customers to conduct more substantive labor market research before choosing an employment goal, encouraging customers to consider employment goals beyond the entry-level, and providing customers with better information about training opportunities that lead to higher wage jobs).

2015 Priority

Increase collaboration within the WorkSource, Washington's One-Stop centers, to improve services to unemployed workers with disabilities who are eligible for DSHS/DVR services by better leveraging DSHS/DVR services with Workforce Investment Act and other workforce development programs.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR jointly developed principles of collaboration with the Washington Workforce Association (WWA) that is comprised of the local WDC directors across the state. These principles lay the foundation for collaboration within the One-Stop system to improve services to unemployed workers with disabilities who are eligible for DSHS/DVR services, and are the basis for local WDC memoranda of understanding with DSHS/DVR that operationalize integrated service delivery.

2015 Priority

Increase collaboration with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to improve coordination of DSHS/DVR services with SBCTC workforce programs and Adult Basic Education programs.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR did not increase collaboration with the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC) to improve coordination of DSHS/DVR services with SBCTC workforce programs and Adult Basic Education programs. However, this continues to be a priority and DSHS/DVR will develop a cooperative agreement with the SBCTC to improve coordination.

Effective Strategies

- Filling 18 Business Specialists positions to provide direct job placement support to DSHS/DVR customers who conduct self-directed job searches, including assistance with resume' development, interviewing skills, finding job leads, and submitting employment applications.

Performance Barriers

DSHS/DVR staff capacity for program improvement projects has been overtaxed by WIOA implementation. As a result, many priorities established in the FFY 2015 State Plan were reprioritized to accommodate WIOA implementation (e.g. efforts to coordinate outreach and increase collaboration with ESD and SBCTC were reprioritized, as WIOA administrative responsibilities have occupied respective program staff). This Combined State Plan refocuses these collaborative efforts beginning in 2016.

FFY 2015 Goal Two: Strengthen DSHS/DVR's Workforce and Improve its Overall Organizational Systems.

Priorities & Evaluation

2015 Priority

Redesign the overall in-service training program to assure that DSHS/DVR staff receives timely and accurate training and skill development as a foundation for consistent service delivery practices.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR developed and implemented an initial phase of WIOA implementation trainings to all staff statewide. These trainings addressed WIOA Performance Accountability, Pre-employment Transition Services, the aforementioned Customer Handbook, and DSHS/DVR's new vocational assessment platform. In addition, DSHS/DVR conducted numerous digital follow-up sessions, using WebEx, to ensure staff issues were address and that implementation remained consistent statewide.

DSHS/DVR collaborated with the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation (CCER) to conduct a three-day In-Service Training for all staff. The training curriculum covered all aspects of service delivery and the event itself included a staff appreciation event in which each DSHS/DVR staff member was recognized.

2015 Priority

In accordance with the DSHS/DVR Cultural Competency Plan, appoint a total of four individuals to VRC positions from minority groups: one each who is African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic. Appoint one individual to a VRC position who is a Disabled Veteran and one who is an individual with a disability.

Evaluation

Of the targeted groups, DSHS/DVR appointed all to VRC positions except for a Disabled Veteran.

2015 Priority

Develop and implement an action plan that responds to key areas of concern identified through the 2013 DSHS/DVR Employee Survey.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR implemented an action plan that responded to key areas of concern identified through the 2013 DSHS/DVR Employee Survey, focusing on better and more timely communication of key organizational changes and staff recognition.

2015 Priority

Develop and implement a DSHS/DVR succession plan that addresses long range attrition at all levels of the organization.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR did not develop a succession plan during FFY 2015. Instead, efforts focused on WIOA implementation.

Effective Strategies

- Significant staff and resource investments in training, by the DSHS/DVR Rehabilitation Act Steering Committee and by DSHS/DVR in partnership with CCER.

- Continued to support supervisors to promote accountability by providing intensive coaching and direction to staff who need to develop or improve counseling skills to achieve qualitative case measures or productivity standards.

Performance Barriers

DSHS/DVR must improve and refine its recruitment practices to attract candidates from targeted groups; it has proven challenging to recruit individuals for counselor positions who are African American, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic, or a Disabled Veteran.

DSHS/DVR staff capacity has been overtaxed by WIOA implementation. As a result, priorities established in the FFY 2015 State Plan were reprioritized (e.g. development of a DSHS/DVR succession plan). Such priorities will be reassessed during the 2016 – 2020 planning cycle, as staff capacity allows.

FFY 2015 Goal Three: Distinguish DSHS/DVR's Role in the Disability and Employer Communities and Leverage Partnerships to Maximize Resources and Support for DSHS/DVR Customers and Individuals with Disabilities.

Priorities & Evaluation

2015 Priority

Enhance and build partnerships that advance opportunities for individuals with disabilities to rapidly obtain employment, including supported employment.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR hired and deployed 18 Business Specialists statewide to assist customers in successfully conducting self-directed job searches. These specialists work closely with WorkSource Business Teams to identify job opportunities for DSHS/DVR customers. In addition, they assist DSHS/DVR customers in submitting timely employment applications, preparing for interviews, and requesting reasonable accommodations.

DSHS/DVR has been actively involved with the Microsoft Corporation to fill 200 supported employment positions on its main campus in Redmond, Washington; virtually all of these positions will be filled by DSHS/DVR customers. A similar relationship has been forged between DSHS/DVR and web-based retailer Amazon to fill non-supported employment positions with DSHS/DVR customers at its distribution center in Kent, Washington.

2015 Priority

Develop relationships with employers to create opportunities for customers to gain work experience through internships and obtain regular jobs that pay well with benefits.

Evaluation

DSHS/DVR hired and deployed 18 Business Specialists statewide who do extensive outreach and marketing to local businesses, and work closely with WorkSource Business Teams.

2015 Priority

Market DSHS/DVR to employers by categorizing the similar employment goals

of customers and strategically targeting employers in corresponding occupations.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR hired and deployed 18 Business Specialists statewide who do extensive outreach and marketing to local businesses, utilizing reports that group customer employment goals by category as a basis for targeting outreach to businesses in corresponding occupations.

2015 Priority Increase understanding and awareness of DSHS/DVR services in local communities.

Evaluation Outreach plans were developed and implemented by local DSHS/DVR offices to serve a broader array of underserved populations and promote increased awareness of available VR services.

2015 Priority Maximize DSHS/DVR local-level knowledge of community programs and services that could benefit DSHS/DVR customers.

Evaluation Local DSHS/DVR Supervisors used unit meetings to broaden their staff's knowledge of community resources to benefit customers.

2015 Priority Collaborate with disability and employment partners to sponsor events that focus on disability recruitment, hiring and retention issues such as mentoring, disability awareness, reasonable accommodation, customized employment, transportation, independent living, benefits issues, etc.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR collaborated with the Community Networks Program (a statewide consortium of local organizations) to fund over 50 local projects and events focusing on disability recruitment, hiring and retention, including events focusing on the employment of students and youth with disabilities.

2015 Priority Bring together employers, DSHS/DVR staff and other workforce partners on a regular basis at the local level to update trends in the job market and maintain a good understanding of employer needs, so that customers are given useful guidance and current information.

Evaluation This activity occurred sporadically in some locales but was not implemented on a statewide basis due to staff turnover in the statewide DSHS/DVR Business Services Manager position. The position was responsible for facilitating this priority and became vacant during FFY 2015. It took time to recruit and hire a new incumbent; during this period it was not possible to fully implement this priority.

2015 Priority Support the DSHS/DVR Business Services Team in developing ongoing employer relationships and providing job placement assistance to customers, including participation in the nationwide employer network sponsored by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Evaluation The statewide DSHS/DVR Business Services Manager position became vacant and was re-hired during FFY 2015. The new Business Services Manager is reinvigorating the team and providing extensive support to develop ongoing business relationships.

2015 Priority

Serve on local WorkSource Business Service Teams to market DSHS/DVR job seekers to employers.

Evaluation This activity occurred sporadically in some locales but was not implemented on a statewide basis due to staff turnover in the statewide DSHS/DVR Business Services Manager position. The position was responsible for facilitating this priority and became vacant during FFY 2015. It took time to recruit and hire a new incumbent; during this period it was not possible to fully implement this priority.

2015 Priority

Conduct regular meetings and information sharing with Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) at the local level to improve communication and better support service delivery coordination.

Evaluation Every local DSHS/DVR unit conducted information sharing meetings with CRPs on a quarterly basis.

Effective Strategies

- Filled 18 Business Specialists positions to conduct employer outreach and serve on WorkSource Business Teams.
- DSHS/DVR continues to expand its knowledge and use of labor market information as well as its education and training capacity to ensure the number of customers trained in an industry matches the number of expected job openings.

Performance Barriers

While local Business Specialists provided valuable services to customers and businesses statewide, key priorities were not accomplished due to the vacant Business Services Manager position. With the recent hire of a new Business Services Manager, DSHS/DVR has set ambitious goals for its coordinated business engagement platform in this Combined State Plan.

FFY 2015 Goal Four: Increase Outreach to Improve and Strengthen DSHS/DVR's Connection and Relationship with Employers.

Priorities & Evaluation

2015 Priority

Increase DSHS/DVR's visibility with and connection to Washington employers. Continue to expand the network capabilities of DSHS/DVR's Employment Services Team.

Evaluation DSHS/DVR hired and deployed 18 Business Specialists statewide that have significantly increased DSHS/DVR's visibility with and connection to local businesses, actively engaging to promote employment opportunities for DSHS/DVR customers.

2015 Priority

Actively participate in the national employer relations model sponsored by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), and integrate these activities into state-level initiatives. Implement the Talent Acquisition Portal (TAP).

Evaluation	DSHS/DVR worked closely with CSAVR to implement TAP and train all DSHS/DVR Counselors to assist customers in using the portal as an element of their job search activities.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Increase the number of customers who participate in internships that lead to competitive employment.
Evaluation	The number of DSHS/DVR customers participating in internships decreased in FFY 2015. The reasons for this decline will be studied and renewed efforts made to increase customer internships, particularly for students and youth with disabilities.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Actively use the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation NET system for developing employer relationships and increasing employment opportunities.
Evaluation	DSHS/DVR actively participated in the NET throughout FFY 2015 and used it to make contact with national employers doing business in Washington.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Market DSHS/DVR to employers by attending local employment expos, job fairs, employer association meetings, and employment events or conferences.
Evaluation	Business Specialists regularly market DSHS/DVR to local employers statewide by attending employment expos, job fairs, employer association meetings, and employment events or conferences.
<u>2015 Priority</u>	Increase the number of DSHS/DVR customers placed into state or Federal government jobs and with private employers that are Federal contractors.
Evaluation	DSHS/DVR was designated by the state Human Resources Office to coordinate the Supported Employment in State Government (SESG) Program, which enables state agencies to establish and hire supported employment positions without the position counting towards their FTE allotments. Primary recruitment to fill SESG position is aimed at DSHS/DVR customers. In addition, DSHS/DVR has worked with the Department of Services for the Blind and Employment Security Department to add a feature on WorkSource website that will permit job matching between applicants with disabilities and employers that are Federal contractors or sub-contractors who must meet Section 503 hiring requirements.

Effective Strategies

- Filled 18 Business Specialists statewide to conduct employer outreach and serve on WorkSource Business Teams.
- DSHS/DVR continues to implement outreach strategies targeting mid-sized and smaller businesses on an ongoing basis.

Performance Barriers

DSHS/DVR did not experience significant performance barriers in achieving priorities outlined under goal four.

FFY 2015 Supported Employment Evaluation: Goals, Strategies, & Barriers

Priorities & Evaluation

DSHS/DVR's goal in FFY 2015 was to serve approximately 1445 customers in supported employment and to achieve approximately 254 successful rehabilitations. This goal was exceeded by achieving 362 supported employment rehabilitations in FFY 2015.

Effective Strategies

- Continued use of a model of service delivery in partnership with county developmental disability programs and community rehabilitation programs
- Continued active marketing of customers to local businesses

Performance Barriers

DSHS/DVR did not experience significant performance barriers in achieving these goals and priorities.

FFY 2015 Funded Innovation and Expansion Activities

During FFY 2015, DSHS/DVR reserved funds for the Washington State Rehabilitation Council and Washington State Independent Living Council. Additional funded innovation and expansion activities are listed below:

- A high school transition model that DSHS/DVR has established with six County Developmental Disabilities Programs to other Counties across the state. Under this model, DSHS/DVR contracts with the County instead of individual Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRP) to place supported employment transition customers with developmental disabilities in to permanent employment when they complete high school. The County funds designated subcontractors a monthly fee to provide community based assessment, job placement, and job coaching services to a customer. When the customer is placed into employment and transitions to extended services, DSHS/DVR pays the County an outcome fee of \$8500.00. This fee is approximately \$3,000.00 less than what DSHS/DVR would pay to a CRP for the same outcome. All of the County subcontractors are CRPs; the advantage for them is they receive a monthly service delivery fee from the County that is not outcome-based instead of a fee from DSHS/DVR that is paid only when an outcome is achieved.
- The Washington Initiative for Supported Employment (WISE) hosting of a comprehensive series of web-based on-demand training modules for CRP Supported Employment Specialists that will increase their knowledge and skills. CRP staff attrition is very high and frequently new Supported Employment Specialists are hired with little or no experience. This significantly slows service delivery and often reduces successful outcomes. The suite of on-demand training modules that WISE produces will be created in partnership with the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation, DSHS Division of Developmental Disabilities, DSHS Division of Behavioral Health & Recovery, and a number of other supported employment partners.

- Development and launch of an assessment tool and training curriculum that will provide DSHS/DVR customers with training to build their Soft Skills, including an assessment tool for VR counselors to determine if an individual requires training to build their skills or some type of mental health or other clinical treatment.
- Expanded availability of the WorkStrides Career Exploration Workshop to customers on a statewide basis. It is presently available at select DSHS/DVR locations and continues to be expanded statewide.

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